

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel without prejudice claims 7, 9 and 10 and amend claims 1, 8, 11 and 12 as follows.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) An apparatus for producing a trip signal to activate a circuit breaker in an alternating current power line, said apparatus comprising:

a sensing circuit operable to sense values representing:

a phase difference between current and voltage in said power line; and

a current amplitude in said power line;

a comparison circuit operable to compare said sensed values of phase difference and current amplitude with a trip characteristic defining fault conditions and non-fault conditions and to generate a fault indication signal when a fault condition arises;

a fault discriminator operable in response to said fault indication signal to generate a fault identifying signal discriminating between:

a first class of fault in which a mean current value after said fault indication increases relative to a mean current value before said fault indication; and

a second class of fault in which a mean current value after said fault indication does not increase relative to a mean current value before said fault indication; and

a trip signal generator responsive to said fault identifying signal and operable to generate said trip signal;

wherein, when said fault identifying signal identifies that said fault condition is due to said second class of fault occurring, said fault discriminator generates a state indication signal discriminating between a second class of fault caused by:

a first state in which there is loss of current for a period following said fault indication followed by restoration of current to a level corresponding to the current level before said fault indication; and

a second state in which there is loss of current for a period following said fault indication followed by a current at a level lower than the current level before said fault indication;

said trip signal generator generates a trip signal when said state indication signal identifies that said fault indication is due to said second state occurring; and

said second condition is an increase in the resistance of a circuit comprising said power line.

2. (original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said alternating current power line carries a three phase alternating current power supply.

3. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said trip signal generator generates a trip signal when said fault identifying signal identifies that said fault indication is due to said first class of fault occurring.

4. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said first class of fault is a short circuit.

5. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said short circuit is a phase-to-phase short circuit.

6. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein, when said fault identifying signal identifies that said fault condition is due to said second class of fault occurring, said trip signal generator generates a trip signal if said fault discriminator determines that said fault condition has persisted for longer than a predetermined time.

7. (cancelled).

8. (currently amended) The apparatus according to claim ~~7~~1, wherein said first state is due to switchgear series arcing.

9. (cancelled).

10. (cancelled).

11. (currently amended) The apparatus according to claim ~~10~~1, wherein said second condition is series arcing due to a defective connection.

12. (currently amended) A method for producing a trip signal to activate a circuit breaker in an alternating current power line, said method comprising the steps of :
sensing values representing:

a phase difference between current and voltage in said power line; and

a current amplitude in said power line;

comparing said sensed values of phase difference and current amplitude with a trip characteristic defining fault conditions and non-fault conditions;

generating a fault indication signal when a fault condition arises;

discriminating, in response to said fault indication signal, between:

a first class of fault in which a mean current value after said fault indication increases relative to a mean current value before said fault indication; and

a second class of fault in which a mean current value after said fault indication does not increase relative to a mean current value before said fault indication;

generating a fault identifying signal in response to said discriminating; and

generating a trip signal in response to said fault identifying signal; wherein,

when said fault identifying signal identifies that said fault condition is due to said second class of fault occurring, generating a state indication signal discriminating between a second class of fault caused by:

a first state in which there is loss of current for a period following said fault indication followed by restoration of current to a level corresponding to the current level before said fault indication; and

a second state in which there is loss of current for a period following said fault indication followed by a current at a level lower than the current level before said fault indication;

generating a trip signal when said state indication signal identifies that said fault indication is due to said second state occurring; and

said second condition is an increase in the resistance of a circuit comprising said power
line.